

# FA071 New Media: Digital Art

Date and Time: Tuesday 8– 12:25

Location: 4th Floor Lab– Smith

Professor: Brian Davis

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Office Hours: 12:30–2:00 Tuesday and by Appt.

**Course blog** [atimidmule.wikipedia.com](http://atimidmule.wikipedia.com)

All modifications to the course syllabus will be posted there. The digital calendar takes precedence over this printed calendar. Additional links to projects, artists, ideas, and tutorials are linked to the syllabus posted on the blog.

## Course description

This class will be structured around three components – studio work, the development of technical skills, and introduction to the broad field of new media / electronic and time-based arts.

There are many types of digital and electronic art practices – with many influences. The course will cover a series of topics that have motivated media artists over the last 30 years, as well as historical roots in other “new” medias, such as photo, film, and radio. Art and design practices (whether they are visual, sonic, conceptual, formal, political, commercial ....) are rooted in close observation of the world. Observing the visual qualities of objects, how people behave, what something sounds like, what something feels like, what a text says, how power is articulated – whatever the focus may be, detailed attention and observation are key starting points. We will follow those observations into the digital realm to see how digital representation and distribution affect the making and reception of art, ideas, and relationships.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

## Learning Outcomes

- To make observations about visual images and information and to articulate responses verbally and visually.
- To develop a knowledge of historical models and movements in the electronic arts. To develop a context for understanding some of the basic cultural and theoretical concerns surrounding the ever-accelerating growth of Electronic (or “New”) Media, while analyzing and assessing ways in which electronic media have helped to create and shape contemporary discourse.
- To learn new technical skills and creatively expand upon your current abilities. Become adept at the use of several hardware devices (such as scanners, computers, printers, etc) and software applications (such as Photoshop, Illustrator and Dreamweaver).
- To produce digital projects for screen and print. To become confident in creating a clear, coherent and thoughtful body of work with the use of digital tool sets.
- To develop conceptually rigorous and socially aware media art and design practices.
- To build generosity and collaboration among peers.
- To expand your perspective on the world around you. To become sensitive to historical as well as immediate concerns shaping our everyday relationship to electronic media and, consequently, the world-at-large.

## Course Structure

Each class will be spent presenting and critiquing assignments, technical demos, and lectures that aim to provide context for assignments and expand your knowledge of digital media as a whole. Class time will be used to the fullest extent – you will be expected to dedicate as much time outside of class as needed to complete your projects, readings, and assignments. The class is broken into several sections of exercises and projects and one final project that you will propose.

Our time will be divided between studio projects, readings, discussions, and field trips. This course

provides demonstrations and hands-on experience with digital multimedia software on the Macintosh platform, including digital imaging tools (digital photography, scanning, Photoshop, Illustrator), basic HTML and web design, and introduction to the moving image and audio recording.

All student projects will be presented in class for discussion and critique. Assignments and exercises are designed to segue into each other so that students are enabled to make connections between individual studio skills and contextualize those skills with concept development.

### **Evaluation**

The grade you earn this semester will be based both upon the quality of the work you make and the quality of your contribution to class discussions and critiques. The quality of the work you produce this semester will be evaluated based upon:

- The thoughtfulness of your approach (at both the research and process stage, as well as in the final piece)
- Your ability to utilize the relevant technology proficiently and present your work in finished form
- Your ability to fulfill the technical and conceptual specifications of each assignment
- Your willingness to take risks, challenge yourself, your peers (and your teacher)
- Your ability to begin to articulate relevant concepts regarding the structural and representational issues at stake

### **Attendance**

Given that we only meet once a week, you are required to attend all classes in full. Two or more missed classes without a doctor's note will adversely affect your grade by 10% per absence. If you will miss class to observe a religious holiday not observed by the University, please inform me at least one week in advance.

No cell phoning / IM-ing / text messaging / emailing or other form of telepresence-based communication during working times of the class unless it is part of your project. Turn it off before you come to class.

### **Late Assignments**

Unless otherwise stated, projects are due at the beginning of class on critique days – attendance is mandatory even if your project is not complete. A letter grade will be deducted for work turned in past the scheduled deadline (unless you have a documented illness or have made an arrangement with me in advance). Leave yourself extra time for technical glitches – they will happen and are an integral part of working with technology. **And back up all of your work.**

Critiques are only valuable if we are all here to help each other understand what we have made. Your grade for the project will drop a letter should you miss critique day for reasons other than illness.

### **Grades**

You are expected to participate in discussions and activities; complete all reading assignments; and devote enough time outside of class to complete all assigned projects before the due date.

- Your contributions to the collective experience of the class will be based upon your attendance, participation in class readings and discussions, and will include postings to the course blog. (15%)
- The work you produce will consist of a sequence of project assignments (55%), technical assignments (20%), and a project notebook (10%) that will be reviewed at specified times through the semester.
- You will turn in a complete portfolio on CD at the end of the semester with documentation of all your projects. This will be due during final exam week at the same time as the final project.

## Materials

The course fee covers expenses for ink and some equipment. In addition, you will need:

- Storage media (USB flash drive or external disk) – Please label with your name or include a readme file with your contact info. These are often left behind and the lab monitors will not be able to return to you if not labeled.
- CD or DVD to back up your work, depending on your usage
- A project notebook – you choose the style, but it should be something that allows for sketching, note-taking, and saving 2d papers/images etc. that you collect
- You will need high quality paper on which to print – we will discuss per project – you may purchase paper either by the box, or from the lab monitors on a per sheet/ per foot basis.

There are recommended texts in supplement to the reading handouts you will be receiving:

- Digital Foundations: Intro to Media Design with the Adobe Creative Suite; Xtine Burroughs; Michael Mandiberg
- Illustrator CS5 for Windows and Macintosh: Visual QuickStart Guide; Elaine Weinmann and Peter Lourekas
- Photoshop CS5 for Windows and Macintosh: Visual QuickStart Guide; Elaine Weinmann and Peter Lourekas

Recommended:

- access to a still digital camera (point and shoot is fine).

## Academic Integrity

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.”

For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

A note on plagiarism vs. appropriation...given the nature of the material in this course, we will be addressing art and scholarship that appropriates content from various sources. Issues of ownership, copyright, and fair use will be discussed, however, as a basic guideline, you should only appropriate material if the act of appropriation is conceptually relevant to your project. The meaning of any appropriated material should be significantly altered from its original intent. Boiled down, if you just want the image, and are not addressing where it came from it's not okay. Find a way to make that image yourself. Additionally, art is often all about the fabrication of information – we will look at artists who employ this as a technique.

## Disability Support Services (DSS)

Students requiring special accommodations in this course should contact Disability Services and speak with the instructor. The information you share is confidential. Such arrangements will help the instructor facilitate, for the benefit of everyone, the full participation of every person in the course.

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

If you require accommodation to fully utilize the computers in the FAAH digital lab, please speak with me about tailoring your account settings.

## University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations

- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals  
**<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>**

**Security**

Please don't leave your things unattended in the lab. Theft is not rampant, but it does happen regularly. Be aware of your surroundings if you are working in the building late at night.

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.